

APPENDIX F

Teacher Comments—Spring 2002

CAHSEE LONGITUDINAL SAMPLE SURVEYS SPRING 2002—CONTENT ANALYSIS

English-Language Arts Teachers [73]

3. **Are you certified in your primary subject area?**
 - 2 other responses: history; social sciences
4. **Including the 2001-2002 school year, how many years have you...**
 - ...been a teacher*—average=13.8 years
 - ...been a teacher in your primary subject area*—average=12.2 years
 - ...taught in your present school*—average=7.9 years
6. **What is your average enrollment per class period this year?**
 - 22.6 students
8. **Think about the level of preparation that students in your classes have in your E-LA for proficiency on the CAHSEE. Estimate the overall percentage of students in each of the following categories:**
 - Excellent E-LA preparation*—average=15.3 percent
 - Good E-LA preparation*—average=34.3 percent
 - Fair E-LA preparation*—average=24.6 percent
 - Poor E-LA preparation*—average=22.4 percent
14. **Comments about “What was your reaction to the performance of students in your school on the Spring 2001 CAHSEE?”**

Sample comments

 - We have many limited English students who improve but still struggle.
 - Students seemed confident that they had done well and were well prepared.
 - We have recently added more than 400 students to our population base, the testing conditions were terrible.
 - Most students passed as freshman.
 - The 9th graders who seek learning in all areas seemed to pass. Lazy or slow learners did not.
 - We've worked diligently to increase skills.
 - I read all my students' essays—many off-topic—and thought that your standards were too low. Some students who passed should NOT have.
 - Grading was too easy (essay).
 - I was shocked some students passed considering I feel their writing ability is way below average.
 - This year they tested in homerooms with fewer distractions and unknowns.
 - There had been many gloom and doom predictions from the district.

22. Please describe any specific changes you made in the 2001-2002 school year to your classroom instructional practices based on influences you attribute to the CAHSEE.

Test Taking Practice/Sample Items [19 of 63 comments/48 percent]

Increased Specific Areas—vocabulary, grammar, language mechanics, non-fiction [12/19 percent]

Increased Reading/Comprehension Practice [8/13 percent]

Increased Writing/Essay Practice [8/13 percent]

Focused on Standards [8/13 percent]

Little or No Change [8/13 percent]

23. Please describe any specific changes you plan to make in the future to your classroom instructional practices based on influences you attribute to the CAHSEE.

Depends on Results [11 of 56 comments/20 percent]

Focus on Standards [10/18 percent]

Test Taking Practice/Sample Items [9/16 percent]

Increase Writing/Essay Practice [8/14 percent]

Increased Specific Areas—vocabulary, grammar, language mechanics, non-fiction, analysis of Literature [6/11 percent]

Increased Reading/Comprehension Practice [5/9 percent]

Provided Remediation/Tutoring/More Review/Review Course [3/5 percent]

Altered Curriculum/Cover Basics [3/5 percent]

Little or No Change [1/2 percent]

26. Please describe any specific challenges you feel your school and students face in meeting the requirements of the CAHSEE?

Weak Academic Foundation [20 of 65 comments/31 percent]

EL and Special Needs Students [16/25 percent]

Provide Remediation/Focus on Basics/Standards [10/15 percent]

Poor Attendance/Poor Parental Attitudes [5/8 percent]

Apathy about CAHSEE/Low Motivation [5/8 percent]

Too Much Testing [5/8 percent]

What to do with Non-Passers [4/6 percent]

27. Please describe any specific benefits that you feel are associated with meeting the requirements of the CAHSEE?

Standard Across the State/Credibility of Diploma [9 of 40 comments/48 percent]

Sense of Accomplishment [8/20 percent]

Accountability [7/18 percent]

Raises the Standard [6/15 percent]

Motivation [6/15 percent]

Provide Good Skills [4/10 percent]

28. Please write any comments about other factors specific to you, your classes, or your school that are influencing preparation for or performance on the CAHSEE.

Economic/Community/Parental Factors [16 of 28 comments/57 percent]

Weak Academic Foundation [5/18 percent]

El and Special Needs Challenge [3/11 percent]

Need More Focus on CAHSEE [3/11 percent]

2-5. Please write any comments, specific to your district, schools, and students, about the E-LA content standards, the CAHSEE, and opportunities for students to learn the content addressed by the standards.

43 Respondents provided comments—many with multiple parts

Inhibiting Factors to Success [10/23 percent]

- Unfortunately, our school has a large mix of English language learners and students from lower socio-economic groups. This factor inhibits the instruction of the state standards at times because the teachers have to focus on the basic tenets of the English language. [4/9 percent]
- Many of us feel frustrated by factors affecting pedagogy such as: 1)over testing 2) the unwieldy nature of the standards (there are too many of them; they run a gamut from the trivial to the nearly unattainable) and the eternal lack of time to analyze testing data with colleagues in a collaborative effort to align instruction, standards and assessments—particularly across curricular borders—with literacy skills and technology/research skills.
- Teachers need MORE and BETTER professional training in the following areas: grammar, strategies for persuasive essays, and generating appropriate research questions. Teachers need \$40/hr MINIMUM to stay after school for training. We need professional development days BACK IN school calendar - funded by the state. MORE COMPETENT teacher trainers.
- More curriculum could be taught that is related if the English Dept. weren't responsible for taking time out for things like picture taking. We are also responsible to teach a health unit. If class sizes could be kept between 22-25 students, there would be more time to teach writing and editing which are weak areas. The English Dept. sees all the students and time-consuming activities are placed on the department that consume valuable time.
- Being a continuation school, however, means we enroll new students weekly. Some students could be enrolled in our school for as little as a couple of weeks when they take the CAHSEE test. We can't possibly teach all the standards all the time, so it's hit and miss.
- I am teaching to the standards but most of our student population is so far below grade level that I am dealing with content standards on a rudimentary level. these students need so much remedial instruction.
- Our district does not provide district-wide training on the CAHSEE. The information that I have obtained from the district is the information issued from the state. Our district does recognize that we have low test scores in reading, and they now require a reading program at each school, effective the spring of 2002. Our district is purchasing new English Language textbooks that will hopefully be aligned with the state standards. Prior to the adoption of the state standards, there was NO grammar required in the high school English classes pursuant to our district curriculum. Our English classes were literature and essay based.
- I believe that students have many learning opportunities, but I have begun to see that their retention is not very high.
- It must be recognized that even though the specific academics and language arts material is taught, the students have to want to learn and use this material.
- Many students cannot reach the higher levels of the standards.

Standards-Based Instruction Positive [9/21 percent]

- The English standards are reasonable goals for our students.
- The English–Language Arts content standard should be taught through the literature read in each grade level.
- We have spent a considerable amount of time aligning curriculum, standards, and CAHSEE. We have tried to match lesson plans to fulfill these requirements. We have a very cooperative administration and staff. [4/48 percent]
- Our site administration has made teaching the content standards a priority regarding both curriculum and instructional strategies.

- Our school district prides itself on following the state standards set for English.
- Our High School English Department, aided greatly by funding from the Kern Educational Partnership (a CAPI project) met for several months last summer to align its courses of study explicitly with the content standards. This process probably did more to increase “opportunities for students to learn the content addressed by the standards” than any other workshop.
- It's a very good idea to have state standards. The problem now is having the time to align our curriculum to the standards. Most teachers will teach what they are directed to teach; the problem is deciding how and when the students will be taught.
- My school and district have worked a lot to integrate standards on all levels of English. We are showing some success as well. I think having standards is great. It pushes the student and teachers and contributes to receiving and giving a better education.
- As district teachers we have spent two years working to (1) rewrite the district standards to be in alignment with state content standards, and (2) re-write course outlines to align each course with the new district standards. Teams of classroom teachers from each grade level (and curriculum) were involved in all phases of the project. New standards have been published, made available to parents and public, and are constantly in the forefront of our planning. We have held inservice workshops on critical questioning and lesson development based on standards. Packets of lesson materials are available to teachers in all grade levels. We are encouraged to have standards being addressed, posted, and visible daily. Administrators have "pocket sized" cards with both content and teaching standards that they use for observation and evaluation purposes. We may not have perfected coverage of all standards, but we are making a valiant effort.

CAHSEE Problem [7/16 percent]

- I do not believe the CAHSEE is the proper assessment [for the content standards].
- I like the old “WRITE” test better than the CAHSEE. I think the two writing samples of the old “WRITE” test where the students drew from personal experience and had more “free response” opportunity worked better; plus, the topics dealt more with real life experiences rather than literary analysis.
- Several of these standards are not touched upon until the junior year of English: (3.12) The historical approach is covered during a student's junior year (senior year also). Junior year is American Literature. Freshmen and sophomores are made aware of historical significance; however, they do not ANALYZE, through writing, but the historical aspect is discussed. (1.5) The majority of students in grades 9 and 10 are not capable of "synthesizing" information from the multitude of sources required by this standard. This can be found most likely in 9th and 10th GATE. (2.4) This standard is also far too encompassing for a 9th or 10th grade student. These students can structure ideas and arguments, but most generally they cannot "appeal to logic through reasoning" or "address readers' concerns, counterclaims, biases and expectations."
- The concept of pass the CAHSEE or get no diploma seems to forget the whole idea of multiple intelligences. You are making vital life decisions based on only a few of the intelligences.
- I feel we are heavy on testing at this time and need to eliminate something in favor of more instructional time. This year 45 of my students worked at home independently for the better part of a week while I administered the CAHSEE to 15 tenth graders. I had to wonder if that was the best use of instructional time. We have so precious little as it is.
- There seems to be STILL a discrepancy in the way the information is taught or presented AND in how they are tested on the CAHSEE.
- The CAHSEE seems to make an attempt at holding the bar pretty high to earn a high school diploma, but it is still not an accurate measurement of how the students learn or what they have learned. The CAHSEE is simply another measure to segregate those who are good test takers from those that are not.

CAHSEE Positive [5/12 percent]

- Teachers need standard based high school exit exams as support in our campaign to improve education in the public schools. Students and their parents must become aware of minimum standards acceptable for being effective citizens and workers in our society. Parents must be alerted when their students are not reaching grade goals. [2]
- I sincerely believe that the CAHSEE will improve standards by making our teaching role clear to all teachers and by making the level of learning required to be functional to our students. The CAHSEE will increase student opportunity to learn and also increase student motivation to learn because the standards of learning will be clearly defined by the exam.

- Way too many students enter my 9th grade classes who do not know how to write a complete sentence, complete paragraph, or an essay. They do not know which their/there/they're to use, or possess other basic writing skills. I welcomed the state standards and CAHSEE.
- I am excited about the challenge of better meeting my students' needs. This tool (CAHSEE) may have many positive outcomes (after initial "growing pains" I'm sure)! ... I am very relieved...that this same instrument ultimately holds them responsible for learning, leading to potentially more of a partnership in education!

Suggestions to Help teachers [5/12 percent]

- What would help me, as a new English teacher, would be specified techniques to teach the specific writing strategies you just listed—not just in a multiple choice format, but as an approach that would improve students' writing.
- I would like to see more state sanctioned prep materials. Often you may teach material in one way and it is tested in another way. I would like to see more coordination between SAT-9 and CAHSEE. Many of the types of questions overlap but many do not. It can be difficult deciding where to focus one's efforts. I would like to see more classes offered (summer school, after school, Saturday) to students who have not passed the test.
- One missing component in the introduction of the CAHSEE and the required changes in curriculum is time for teachers to meet to plan, create, and implement new lessons. The shift from assigning writing to directly teaching writing is an enormous one. Few teachers have models of how to teach writing other than the traditional assign the task and then evaluate. This curricular requirement, directly teaching writing—is the most positive possible effect of the CAHSEE; however, few schools or districts are prepared to make the changes.
- I see that our teachers will need in-service training in the specific standards assessed. Currently, the staff sees the need for remedial classes to both prepare and support the students.
- Seventy per cent of students enter high school lacking the content standards for 5th through 8th grades. Ninth, 10th, 11th and 12th grade standards cannot be taught without mastery of prior standards. Teachers need to be assisted with designing and implementing a curriculum that fills in the gaps. Translating the standards into objectives is not an easy task. Teachers could do it, given enough time, but we don't have the time. Why not state the content standards in terms of objectives? Why not create grade level pretests to see if students are prepared for the content standards for the grade being entered? These steps would allow the teacher's creative energies to be devoted to presentation, to differentiated instruction, to parent contact.

CAHSEE Administration [1/2 percent]

- I would like to see students able to complete the whole language arts section in one day so that if they are absent the next day they can at least get credit for having completed one part.

CAHSEE LONGITUDINAL SAMPLE SURVEYS SPRING 2002—CONTENT ANALYSIS

Mathematics Teachers [77]

3. Are you certified in your primary subject area?

- 4 other responses: technology; physical science; social studies; multiple subjects

4. Including the 2001-2002 school year, how many years have you...

...been a teacher—average=13.8 years

...been a teacher in your primary subject area—average=11.4 years

...taught in your present school—average=6.8 years

6. What is your average enrollment per class period this year?

- 24.6 students

8. Think about the level of preparation that students in your classes have in your E-LA for proficiency on the CAHSEE. Estimate the overall percentage of students in each of the following categories:

Excellent math preparation—average=24.6 percent

Good math preparation—average=13.7 percent

Fair math preparation—average=21.5 percent

Poor math preparation—average=25.8 percent

14. Comments about What was your reaction to the performance of students in your school on the Spring 2001 CAHSEE?

Sample comments

- Students thought that it is voluntary and they have to take it again.
- I had no expectations. I don't understand the factors, which at my school are complex.
- I know what my student's ability is. / I know what our students know!!!
- We're a low performing school with high rate of transfer.
- They don't care -- yet! / Not aware of its significance.
- Considering the percent needed to pass, I expected more to pass.
- Not all freshmen took the test - lack of motivation.
- Academic students passed, non-academic students did not. Long time block resulted in low interest for non-academic students.
- 9th graders couldn't be prepared - most were in pre-algebra.
- Administration of test was not organized well.

22. Please describe any specific changes you made in the 2001-2002 school year to your classroom instructional practices based on influences you attribute to the CAHSEE

Test Taking Practice/Sample Items [22 of 57 comments/39 percent]

Focused on Standards [9/16 percent]

Provided Remediation/Tutoring/Repetition/7th Grade Math [7/12 percent]

Altered Curriculum/Order of Topics [5/9 percent]

Little or No Change [14/25 percent]

23. Please describe any specific changes you plan to make in the future to your classroom instructional practices based on influences you attribute to the CAHSEE.

Test Taking Practice/Sample Items [14 of 50 comments/28 percent]

Provide Remediation/Tutoring/More Review/Review Course [10/20 percent]

Focus on Standards [7/14 percent]

Depends on Results [4/8 percent]

Altered Curriculum/Cover Basics [3/6 percent]

Little or No Change [12/24 percent]

26. Please describe any specific challenges you feel your school and students face in meeting the requirements of the CAHSEE?

Weak Academic Foundation [11 of 40 comments/28 percent]
Provide Remediation/Focus on Basics/Standards [8/20 percent]
Apathy about CAHSEE/Low Motivation [6/15 percent]
Poor Attendance/Poor Parental Attitudes [6/15 percent]
EL and Special Needs Students [4/10 percent]
What to do with Non-Passers [3/8 percent]
Too Much Testing [2/5 percent]

27. Please describe any specific benefits that you feel are associated with meeting the requirements of the CAHSEE?

Accountability [7 of 27 comments/26 percent]
Sense of Accomplishment [5/19 percent]
Stronger Math Foundation [5/19 percent]
Raises the Standard [3/11 percent]
Motivation [3/11 percent]
Standard Across the State/Credibility of Diploma [2/487]
More Ready for College [2/7 percent]

28. Please write any comments about other factors specific to you, your classes, or your school that are influencing preparation for or performance on the CAHSEE.

Economic/Community/Parental Factors [9 of 14 comments/64 percent]
EL and Special Needs Challenge [3/21 percent]
Weak Academic Foundation [2/14 percent]

3-5. Please write any comments, specific to your district, schools, and students, about the mathematics content standards, the CAHSEE, and opportunities for students to learn the content addressed by the standards.

27 Respondents provided comments—many with multiple parts

Standards-Based Instruction/Aligned Curriculum Positive [9/33 percent]

- The standards are valuable in that they provide clear guidance for teaching math and it appears that, because of CAHSEE, students are taking the test seriously. I expect this situation to improve as math teaching is improved in the primary grades.
- If the standards are taught, students should not have a problem with the CAHSEE.
- I feel that the majority of students in our school and district are given the opportunity to learn the content addressed by the standards. However, being given the opportunity and taking advantage of the opportunity are two different things.
- Students must take a year of geometry and first year algebra. They must successfully complete these classes to graduate from our high school. 2001-2002 is the first year our school did not offer a "pre-algebra" class. All students, even those who failed math 8 or math 9 had to enroll in an algebra class. The exceptions were students who successfully completed Algebra lab.

Inhibiting Factors to Success [8/30 percent]

- In my opinion, parents should become involved in their children's education. They should check their homework and make sure students perform their assigned tasks.
- Some students are just not intrinsically motivated to learn, especially in their early years of high school. By the time they realize how important the content is that their teachers have been trying to teach them all these years, it is too late. We also have other factors in our district that have attributed to low overall test scores in the past. Such as, low socio-economic families, high levels of ELL, and non-English speaking students and families, and specific to our school—a high level of special education students. All of these factors could definitely contribute to our student's performance of the CAHSEE.
- ...students are unmotivated and lack parental participation.

Mathematics Curriculum Problem [4/15 percent]

- ...we must teach basic math skills and rarely get past understanding variables. Students come to us because they cannot do basic math and have dropped out of those classes and regular schools. We are dealing with standards for elementary grades. We offer and are prepared to teach HS standards but rarely have students who come prepared to succeed. Also student attendance is very poor (which is why they are [illegible] so continuity of instruction is impossible.
- In a community school program mathematics courses are not offered.
CAHSEE Problem [3/11 percent]
- My only comment refers to a passing score vs. a non passing score and how these are calculated. My present understanding is that there is a minimum score that must be achieved on each of two tests. A student passes the CAHSEE only if both scores are equal to or above the minimum on each test. It is my opinion that there should be a second possible passing option; that of a minimum combined score of the two tests. The school system nor the student has failed if preparation for success in the job market or success in higher learning institutions has been achieved. Oftentimes it is possible for an individual to succeed in an endeavor which requires either math or English more strongly than the other. If a student's skills are in unison with this requirement, they may be properly prepared for success in this specific endeavor. By placing absolute minimum scores for both tests and not granting diplomas based on this, we may be barring a group of students from later successes which have, heretofore, never been barred from success by either their skills or artificial minimum standards.
- I feel this test does discriminate against poor test takers. There should be more than a project or something hands on. Some students can better show their knowledge through explanation.
- How can we call a test which covers middle school math an "exit" exam? Call it what it is - an entry exam.
CAHSEE Positive [3/11 percent]
- I think having the CAHSEE is very effective. We will have more students who will graduate ready [for] college since they were tested in all the standards that need to be known in high school. Dropout kids' number will decrease. The challenges we are having are to make sure that these kids are well prepared for these tests. This can be done by having new classes in Math for remediation and preparation. Tutoring will help, too! I agree strongly with the CAHSEE. Students must be prepared to succeed in colleges and this is a way to do it.
- It is good to take the CAHSEE during the sophomore year. This gives the chance for the freshmen to take all of Algebra before taking the exam.